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SUBJECT: XINHUA OFFICIAL ON THE WEN VISIT; TAIWAN; HONG KONG

REF: BEIJING 18294

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Jon Aloisi.  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) Well-connected Xinhua News Agency official Yu Jiafu explained on December 16 that Chinese media were slow to report the significance of Premier Wen Jiabao's key U.S. meetings because substantive news articles had to be cleared by Wen himself. The leadership is pleased with the Premier's U.S. visit, which is translating into relatively positive news coverage of the United States, at least for now. Yu disclosed that State Council Taiwan Affairs officials Chen Yunlin and Zhou Mingwei are under heavy fire because of their perceived "soft" policy course on Taiwan and their failure to predict the outcome of Taiwan's referendum legislation issue. Yu identified CPPCC Chair Jia Qinglin as a central player devising China's Taiwan policy. He noted the recent formation of the Leading Group on Hong Kong in the aftermath of the July 1 demonstration. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The head of International Affairs of the official Xinhua News Agency, Yu Jiafu (protect), told poloff on December 16 that the Chinese leadership is very pleased with the trip of Wen Jiabao to the United States. As a result, the official media are being encouraged to reflect the current state of strong bilateral relations in their products. Yu cited the Chinese media's treatment of Saddam Hussein's capture as an example the current Chinese propaganda line (reftel). (Note: December 15 evening news broadcasts provided significantly greater straight news coverage of Saddam's capture than earlier reports. The important 7:00 P.M. CCTV news program devoted approximately seven minutes of the half hour program to reports on Saddam, including coverage of congratulatory messages from around the world. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Yu noted that media coverage of the Wen visit was low key compared to previous visits to the United States by senior leaders. This was in accord with an order by senior leaders earlier this year to "routinize" stories about overseas trips, Yu explained. This order was contained in the same document that put an end to grand departure ceremonies at the Great Hall of the People for traveling senior leaders. Yu acknowledged that the Chinese media was slow to report information about Premier Wen's meeting with the President, particularly their discussions about Taiwan. He attributed this to the "clearance system" for articles written about the senior leadership. Following the White House meeting, Vice

Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong gave the Chinese media a press background briefing. After the briefing, the Xinhua reporter traveling with the party wrote his article and cleared it through several layers of delegation members. Wen himself approved the final draft, Yu disclosed. Nearly two days had elapsed by the time the Premier approved the official article.

#### TAO Under Fire

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¶4. (C) State Council Taiwan Affairs Office Director Chen Yunlin and Deputy Director Zhou Mingwei have been under fire from senior leaders for their "mishandling" of the cross-Straits situation, Yu revealed. In addition to being criticized for their policy of "soft responses" to Chen Shui-bian's recent actions, Chen and Zhou have been taken to task for not predicting the Pan-Blue's shift on the referendum issue and the outcome of the Legislative Yuan's wrangling on the referendum law. Yu noted that while Hu Jintao is the nominal chair of the Leading Group on Taiwan, the leading voice on cross-Straits affairs belongs to Politburo Standing Committee member Jia Qinglin. As chair of the CPPCC, Jia oversees United Front work, much of which is Taiwan-related. Yu predicted that Jia would become increasingly involved in the Taiwan issue in the coming months.

#### Hong Kong: Continued Support for Tung

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¶5. (C) Yu noted that senior leaders continue to be supportive of Hong Kong Chief Executive C.H. Tung and expected him to serve out his term, but recognize that he is flawed as a manager of Hong Kong's problems. During Tung's December 3 meetings in Beijing, Central Government leaders again emphasized to Tung that he should do a better job of "representing the Hong Kong people," meaning that he should listen to the views of a broader array of the Hong Kong population. Interestingly, Yu continued, the Central Government made a commitment after the July 1 demonstration to better understand all segments of Hong Kong society, including political parties with whom Tung has had a strained relationship. Through this outreach, the Central Government better understands that the Democrats represent a very complex array of issues, some of which are not necessarily inimical to Beijing's interests. Yu predicted that Beijing would invite more senior representatives of the Democratic Party to Beijing for talks in the future. Asked about democratization, Yu said that senior leaders are currently concerned about stability and expressed the view that the situation in Hong Kong would have to "calm down" further before the Central Government permitted movement toward universal suffrage.

¶6. (C) Yu alluded to the recent formation of the Leading Group on Hong Kong as a demonstration of the importance of the Hong Kong issue to Beijing. Prior to July 1, the Hong Kong and Macau Work Committee (Gangao Gongwei) led by Hong Kong and Macau Office Director Liao Hui handled most of the Central Government's policy decisions on the HKSAR and MSAR. Following the demonstration, however, the Work Committee was elevated to the status of a Leading Group with Hu Jintao as its chair and Vice President Zeng Qinghong as the architect of policy.

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